

Chairman's Report 2015

Two major anniversaries have been celebrated in 2015.

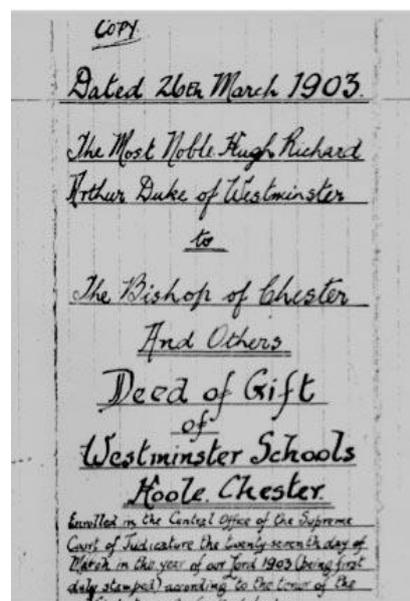
Hoole Westminster Schools were opened in 1865 and a project was initiated:

- To create an archive of deeds, records and photographs relating to the former Westminster Road School and Hoole Community Centre Building.
- To publicise the project at an open meeting, exhibiting the material collected and inviting former pupils and their relatives and local people to donate or allow to be copied more contributions.
- To study government papers, inspection reports, log books and newspaper articles, dating and identifying photographs.
- To present the findings to a reunion meeting of past users of the premises.

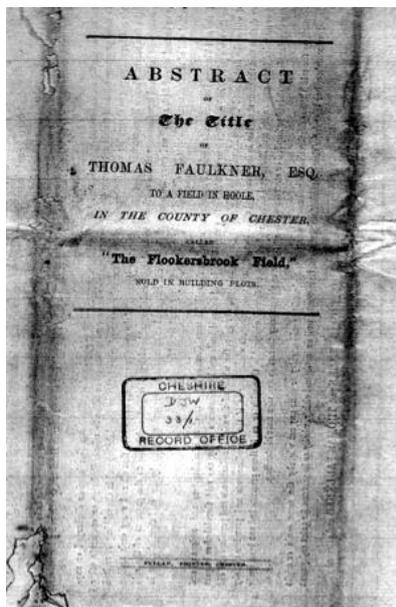
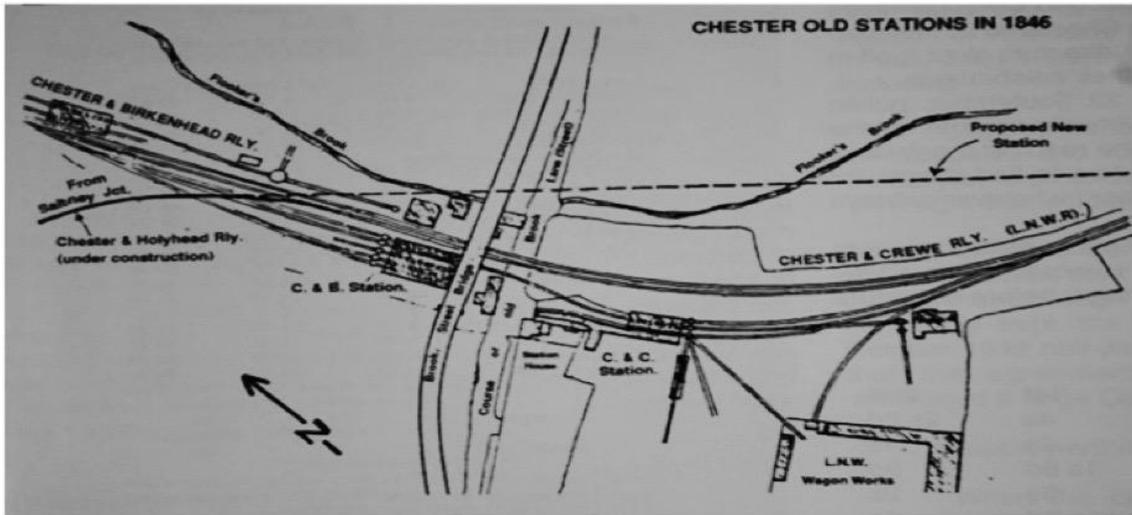


An information gathering day in March attracted over 40 former pupils and their families who brought photographs, school reports, certificates and exercise books, some from the 1920's, and unique individual stories were recorded. Research revealed the origins of the School, from premises in Faulkner Street, through negotiations by a Miss Jane Carver of Egerton Terrace with the Marquis of Westminster for a School which was to be non-denominational for some 30 years; the original John Douglas building, its improvements, and extension in 1895 when it was attended by over 500 children; the eventual takeover of the School by All Saints Church, which led to the erection of the Tin Chapel in Walker Street.

The School became a National School and a Deed of Gift dated 1903 was found, when the Duke of Westminster "gave" the School to the Bishop of Chester and others. Details of inspection reports, the succession of teachers and changes in status in the 20th Century (girls, infants, mixed, junior) have also been recorded. A successful reunion took place on October 10th when over 50 people attended, an exhibition through the decades was mounted and a continuous slide show run. Pleasingly, even more material and information came forward and is still arriving.



The second anniversary celebrated the coming of the railways to Chester in 1840. Phil Cook led members on a tour of the environs of Chester Railway Station in June and in September the Society mounted an exhibition at the celebrations on the Station Platform, Phil again conducting tours. The Society, largely through Phil, now possesses a large amount of material, probably unique as a collection, on the early history of the railways in Chester and in November he gave a talk which illustrated many of his findings. A major discovery was a petition sent by the great and the good of Hoole asking for access for residents of Hoole from the Flookersbrook side of the station.



The presentation of a third parcel of land related the history of Flookersbrook Field, which included details of the Will of John Brereton 1631, the distribution of its rents, issues, and profits to 100 poor persons in 9 local parishes, and to fund a St. George's Day Lecture; its subsequent sale by the Town of Chester; its purchase by Thomas Faulkner, to be sold in lots in 1850 which led to the building of the first six urban streets of Hoole. A history of Egerton Terrace and the family of James Mowle, Ironfounder, who lived there and later at 91 Hoole Road, illustrated further the development of the area.

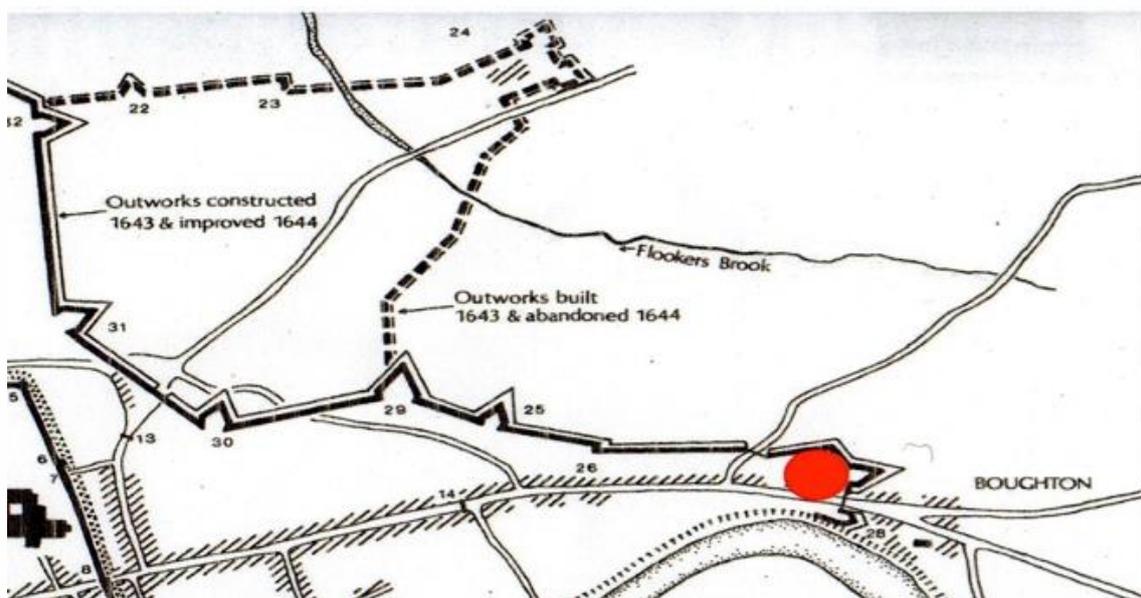
The Society continued to remember the consequences of the outbreak of World War 1 and in February Ann Marie and John Curtis gave us an account of its effects upon the families of the Parish of St. Werburgh's. The explanation of how the Roman Catholic Church was, and is, organised in Chester was a story in itself, and research into the parishioners' lives both those who went to war and those left behind were graphically and sympathetically described. Dave Rees continued his research into the First World War and fuller details of 141 casualties including those not on Hoole Memorial are now listed on our website e.g.

GOODING, Stuart John

Regiment: 2nd Btn Irish Guards
 Rank: Private
 Number: 5194
 Died: 19th July 1917
 Age: 24
 Buried: Bleuet Farm Cemetery, Belgium
 Address: 4 Clare Avenue

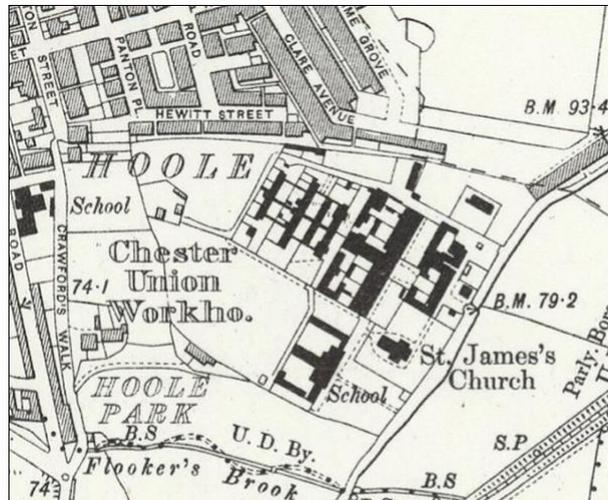
Cheshire Observer 11/08/17 - "We regret to learn that Private Stuart John Gooding Irish Guards....son of Mr and Mrs Gooding Clare Avenue Hoole has been killed in action. He joined the Army on the outbreak of War. Previously he was employed (as a shunter) on the London and North Western and Great Western Joint Railways at Chester for nine years. He was aged 24 years. Private Gooding was a scholar in All Saints School Hoole. He went abroad in February 1915 and was wounded on July 11th 1915 after which he came home. He again went abroad in August 1916 and he killed on July 19th this year. His captain writes "He was in a trench and was killed by a shell which burst close by him."

The scenario of a very different war was described in October when Bob Burgess, a member of the Sealed Knot Society, talked about the Siege of Chester 1645-6. Against the background of the national political situation he described the activities and personalities on both sides which led to events, some of which were particularly relevant to our area:



Earthworks protecting Flookersbrook Bridge and Flookersbrook Hall

A presentation on the Chester Union Workhouse at 57 Hoole Lane revealed hitherto unknown information found in the National Archives at Kew, the Cheshire Record Office and from a search of contemporary newspapers. Opened in 1878 at a cost of £24,500, it was big enough to hold 450 persons, a School for 150 poor children and a Hospital Infirmary. Details of the occupants, the staff, the regime and conditions were investigated, as was the 20th Century history when it became a hospital before its demolition in 1991.



The history of Hoole Park, gleaned from early Committee papers of Hoole Urban District Council, confirming its intention to provide amenities for the well-being of its residents, was related at the July meeting. The Park covering some 6 acres was officially opened on 7th May 1904 and the bowling greens were installed in 1908. In 1911, the Park was named after Her Majesty Queen Alexandra.



The Society was invited to contribute a History Corner to the freely distributed Hoole Roundabout and from April a number of articles on various streets in Hoole, the Workhouse and our 150th Anniversary celebrations of the Westminster Schools have appeared. These have provoked great interest and have led to new local material being produced and also enquiries, which have in themselves led to revelatory research. Queries have also been made via our website and examples from both are:

- Hoole Bank House
- Hoole Lane, Roberts Row, and Myrtle Grove
- Canadian Avenue
- Happenings in Law Street
- Dickinson (Chemist) family
- Dawson (Newsagent) family
- Lady Hamilton, Lord Nelson's mistress – was she local?
- Flookersbrook – was the stream the boundary of the Wirral Hundred?

The activities of the Society have raised its awareness in the community and has resulted in talks being given to a number of organisations e.g.

- 11 November 2014 Ladies Friendship Group, United Reformed Church, Hoole.
'Victorian Hoole'
- 12 January 2015 Huxley and Hargrave Historical Society. *'Royal Agricultural Show, Hoole 1893'*
- 13 November 2015 Eaton Lodge. *'Overview of History of Victorian Hoole'*
- 24 November 2015 Ladies Friendship Group, United Reformed Church, Hoole.
'Development of Hoole Township and the Urban District'
- 1 December 2015 Railway Pensioners Group. Phil Cook *'The coming of the railways'*
- 10 December 2015 Burton and Neston History Society. *'Royal Agricultural Show, Hoole 1893'*

This tends to be a two-way process, with new information from attendees often forthcoming. The Society mounted an exhibition, mainly on the Westminster Schools 150th Anniversary at the Cheshire Local History Day in Northwich. This led to a surprising number of leads and contacts from members of other local history groups – Macclesfield School's land in Flookersbrook; Finchetts Gutter; Hoole Bank; balloon ascents by the occupants of Hoole Hall; the Wigg family at Leahurst?; tokens and the 'divi' at Co-op shops; all on our agenda for further research.



Celebration of the Coronation of William IV at Flookersbrook 1831 (British Museum)

As at 17th November 2015, the Society had 35 individual, 30 family, 5 business and 3 group members. We have expanded from the National Heritage Lottery funded Victorian time-base, both historically back-wards and community-relevant forward. Our main aim is to build an archive of material relative to the history of our area so that future generations will be aware of its existence and location. We have discovered and recorded - and also shared - so much in 2015.